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PLATE 1

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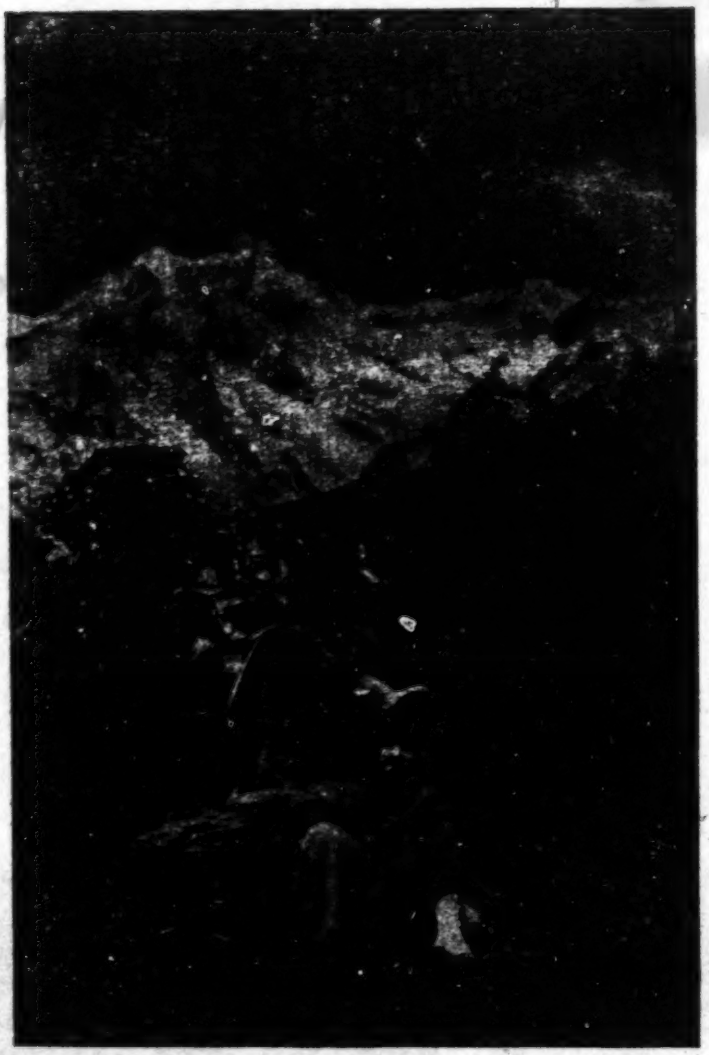

MRS. TAFOOR NURSING HER YOUNGEST DAUGHTER:
BEHIND KINCHENJUNGA

[Frontispiece]

[Facing p. 5]

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845 or murderer. Marks with no definite significance show that the expectant parents had daubed their bodies or faces with paint.

Multiple births are excessively rare. There is one case of girl triplets being born in the neighbourhood, but none of them survived the age of three months. Twins are also very uncommon; twins of the same sex are considered lucky; if they are disparate it is lucky if the girl is born first; should the boy be born first it is bad and the children will die young. It is a cultural axiom that it is desirable for the first child to be a girl as she will be more help to the mother with subsequent children. But this axiom presupposes large families which are now uncommon; and many people have said to me that, though most people would prefer their first child to be a girl, they personally would prefer a boy, so as to be certain of having an heir, and somebody to live with them and look after them in their old age. It is also a cultural axiom that a father is more pleased at the birth of a daughter, and the mother at the birth of a son, and it is expected that parents will prefer their children of the opposite sex, but this is by no means always borne out in practice.

A still-born infant will be immediately taken down to the river by two or three friends of the parents; a Mun will prepare a bunch of stinging and prickly plants and will wait for the carriers to return, so that he can *pék* them some way away from the house. In such a case the mother's milk will be expelled on to a hot stone to dry up the flow; she cannot nurse other babies as her milk would be harmful for them.

Still-born babies and infants reincarnate immediately as the devil Ing-bong *moong*, and in this guise try to kill other children by giving them infantile diarrhoea. Ing-bong *moong* takes the form of a 'small wind' (probably a dust devil) and makes a noise first like a bird and then like a child. If two people together come across one they can dispose of it in the following way; one will chase the 'small wind' towards the other who will hack it with his knife when it arrives. If on the morrow a dead insect is found at the spot where the wind was it is a sign that the devil is dead.

597 853 Should the mother die in child-birth, there is considered to be little hope of saving the child, unless there happens to be a nearly related woman willing and able to nurse the baby. If the baby is three weeks old or over when its mother dies it may be reared on cows' milk; this is given in a cup through the stem of a plant which, when the outer bark is removed, resembles an indiarubber teat.

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Milk may also be given to such orphans by the feeder taking it into his or her mouth and squirting it into the baby's. Two boys in Lingthem were artificially reared in this way. If the mother and child both die the child is placed in the mother's lap before the body is disposed of; similarly if the mother dies in the last months of pregnancy the foetus is ripped out and placed on her lap before burning or burial.

Children normally witness the birth of subsequent siblings and of other children born in the house. Except for one nervous adult, Jiroong, who said he was frightened when his younger sister was born, children do not seem to regard child-birth with any deep emotion. Twelve-year-old Ribu voiced the general sentiment when he said that during birth he was not frightened, though he was anxious for his mother. Children take birth in a very matter-of-fact way; 'first of all a woman becomes pregnant and then she puts out a child'. Only adopted children or only children who have not had occasion to witness child-birth surround the situation with any emotion or curiosity.[1]

ii

For the first three days of life the baby is considered to be still in the womb and all the pre-natal precautions have to be observed. It is not even referred to as a human child; it is called a rat-child. During those three days the mother must on no account touch the ground; were she to do so the blood clot would not descend. The father may go out but must not do heavy work such as lifting stones or cutting trees; such actions would cause the woman pain in her belly. Also nobody except those who live in the house must enter the house or see the child; should they do so the mother will have terrible pains. If the mother has recovered she can do ordinary household work. After the birth feast on the third day the mother may go outside as soon as she feels that she is strong enough to do so; no ceremony marks the first going out of a newly delivered mother, though for the first month she is fed on a special strengthening diet of chicken soup and extra strong *chi*.

On the third day the baby is officially born and a special birth feast is held for it. Before strangers enter the house the floors are scrubbed with wormwood plants, and incense burnt, and every member of the house washes his body, first in hot water indoors, and then in a stream, and also his clothes, to remove the uncleanness of birth.

[1] See Chapter Fifteen, p. 390.

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553 Some time during the ceremony the child is given its first name.
846 This may be given by the officiating Mun, or suggested by anyone else present. Usually the father invites suggestions. Unless the child has some physical peculiarity or some peculiar circumstance connected with its birth the first (temporary) name is usually the day of the week on which it was born, in Tibetan.

833 Either three, seven, or twenty-one days after delivery the
846 husband copulates with his wife ritually, on the side and *a retro*, moving very slowly and gently, so that the semen may take away the pains of child-birth. If this is done after three days, it is called *sak-non mon-lok*, if after seven *tang-bong ʒaam*. It is only put off after seven days at the request of the wife, and there is no name for a later performance. Copulation *a retro* is fairly usual, though some people dislike it; it is considered more discreet than the normal position and is used when quietness is desired, and to avoid being noticed.

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● 853 For the first two days the baby is fed exclusively on its mother's milk; on the third day, at its birth feast, it is given a tiny pellet of pounded rice mixed with butter; and thereafter it is given a small bit of this mixture three times a day. At about the age of eight months it is given a little cooked and pounded rice, and after that the solid part of its diet is gradually increased. Babies are not
862 usually weaned until the birth of the next sibling, and there is usually an interval of three to four years between births; consequently the greater number of children are on a completely solid diet before they are weaned. It sometimes happens that the mother becomes pregnant again fairly quickly; in such cases the babies are fed on cows' milk and rice, a diet which produces pot-belly. This is exceptional, and only a couple of babies are thus malformed.

In the greater number of cases children are old enough to understand talk before they are weaned, and they are told that they cannot suckle any more because the new baby wants the milk; if the child will not accept this the mother smears her breasts with the new baby's excreta to disgust the older child. Children are always told that the new-born baby is Sang-rong *moong*, who is a bogey the size of a small child specially invented to frighten children; this is done to prevent young children handling the new-born infant, and also to scare them into renouncing the rivalry for the mother's breast.

On occasion weaning is accompanied by physical separation.

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Jiroong, who has extraordinarily precise memories of his infancy said that ' he was three when his sister was born. He was taking his mother's breast till the birth, which he witnessed and which frightened him very much. He was told that the new baby was Sang-rong *moong*. He was weaned in two ways; his mother's breasts were smeared with excrement, and a sister of his father took him away to her home and told him he must not cry because " Sang-rong *moong* was with his mother and would eat him". He remembers vividly that for a week he cried every night for his mother's breast, and then resigned himself to doing without. For some time his aunt looked after him, sometimes keeping him with her at her house, and sometimes going to his home and sleeping with him.' In the same way Tobgé's wife had sent her son, aged a little over two, to live with her parents in their village a day's journey away. Since she was not pregnant again this conduct was disapproved of; it was considered to be a further illustration of Tobgé's irresponsibility and her immorality.

Normally a child is only suckled by its mother, but if the mother dies, or for any other reason becomes incapable of suckling the child, it may be suckled by another woman whom the child will call 'mother', or occasionally by the grandmother. A child does not have more than one nurse at a time, and would not be given a feed by a lactating woman during the mother's temporary absence. The reason given for this is that in taking another woman's milk the child would contract a debt which it would never be able to repay; and this debt would be a burden to it after its own death.

It is a general Lepcha belief that any woman who has once borne a child can produce milk spontaneously when a baby sucks; and this seems to be borne out by the fact that on occasion if the mother dies the grandmother will suckle the grandchild. I myself saw Kurma's mother-in-law suckling her granddaughter, though it was over twenty years since she herself had borne her last child. Some women too can produce milk without having borne a child; at first this milk is indigestible for the infant, but it is subsequently perfectly all right. If the mother dies the husband's breasts will very often swell; but they only produce a sort of lymph and not proper milk. As far as my observations and inquiries go it seems clear that Lepcha women lactate with far more facility than European women.

A youngest child will continue sucking until the mother's milk dries up, or until the child ' becomes ashamed '; this may continue

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853 up to puberty. Gongyop's only surviving son took the breast until he was ten; and Pursang, Chano's second 'son', was suckled by a childless aunt[4] until her death, which occurred when he was eleven.

853 Babies are nursed continuously whenever they cry. Very young children are held in the mother's arms and she nurses them stand-
854 ing; but when the babies get a certain control of movement the favourite nursing position is for the mother to sit cross-legged while the baby lies freely on its back in the mother's lap. The mother leans forward slightly so as to bring the breast within reach, and supports the baby slightly with one arm. The suckling situation is pleasant and comfortable, but save perhaps for patting the baby's bottom gently with one hand the mother does not pet or play with the child and will usually talk to people standing by while the baby is drinking. I never saw a mother withdraw the breast until the baby had quite finished. At night the baby's bedding is so placed as always to be within reach of the mother's breast.

After the age of about ten months a baby does not cry for food if it is in its mother's arms but claws at the front of her dress in an attempt to undo it; only if the desired food is then withheld does it start whimpering. If it is being held by other people, whether men or women, it will also claw at the front of its carrier's clothes; if the mother is absent the baby can often be quieted by letting it lay its head against the warm body of its carrier.

[753] Nursing mothers should not eat bones or other hard things or else they will lose their teeth; apart from this there are no diet restrictions unless the baby falls seriously ill (accidents, infantile diarrhoea or teething trouble are not considered serious illnesses). In such cases the mother must avoid salt, meat, and *chi*; divination will discover whether wet or dry rice is more suitable for her, and she will live on that together with buckwheat, a *lavatera* leaf, and butter. Besides this she has to avoid sitting in the sun or in damp places. None of these restrictions apply to the father.

854 During the first year of their lives young children are washed in warm water morning and evening; after that they are washed once

[4] I was told that this woman had never borne a child, but the people who told me about her were not near relations, and it is possible that she had borne a still-born infant or one who had died very young. The death of very young children is not taken much notice of, and often not remembered except by the parents. The three people I discussed the matter with however all declared that this aunt had never borne a child.

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its blade can be seen in most of the photographs of women which illustrate this book, projecting from one side. There is no ceremony when a child is presented with its first knife or sickle.

Twins appear to be very infrequent, and there were none in Lingtem. It is thought, however, that identical twins are lucky, fraternal twins being unlucky unless the girl is born before the boy, in which case it does not greatly matter.

When a child cries it is immediately given the breast, even at night, and it is never at any time fed at regular intervals. It sleeps with its mother until it is about five or six, or until the arrival of another child. The youngest child is never weaned and generally sleeps with its parents until it is about twelve years of age. There is no doubt that this has a considerable psychological effect upon the child, for it is very easy to recognise the youngest of a family at all stages of its life. As children they are much more fractious than others, and in later life are inclined to be neurotic. I am aware that this is a generalisation and as such not to be taken too seriously; but nothing short of a prolonged investigation by a trained psychologist, carried out over a considerable number of years, would give evidence of scientific value. I am informed, however, by the Hon. Mary Scott, who has been doing missionary work with the people of the Eastern Himalayas for the past thirty years, that Lepcha girls, when the youngest member of their family, are almost invariably of loose morals. She attributes this—rightly, I think—to the fact that such children have nightly physical contact with their parents until a much later age than is normally the case. When this is suddenly denied them it seems the natural thing for them to seek some other form of bodily contact; and thus it comes about that young mothers of illegitimate children are very frequently themselves the youngest of their families; but the evidence is insufficient to know if the two states can be definitely correlated. I am inclined to think, however, that they can; but this is merely a personal opinion.

Should a baby that is still being breast-fed become ill its

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853 mother must take care not to go out in the sun, nor should
757 she sit down in any damp place. She should also give up eating salt and meat for the time being and it is better if she takes no *chi*. A diet consisting solely of rice and butter is considered the best at such a time.

856 There is nothing a mother can do to help her baby over the teething period, but it is considered better at such a time not to feed the child on frogs' or bears' flesh, or it will not talk until very late. The teeth should start to appear when the child is eight months old and should be complete by the end of the twelfth month; but if the child is seen by a pregnant woman its teeth will not appear until after that woman's child is born. For this reason pregnant women always take care not to look at other people's babies. The
777 lower teeth of a boy should appear before the upper or the
842 child's luck will not be good: moreover, if the first child is a boy and its upper teeth appear first it means that the next child will be a girl. With girls the reverse applies; and in
787 cases where their upper teeth do not appear first it means that in later life they will have trouble with domestic animals, and are likely to lose their husbands soon after marriage. Nothing can be done in cases of this sort, and parents generally conceal the fact that their children's teeth have appeared in the wrong order. It is a bad sign if a child of either sex has pointed milk-teeth in the lower jaw: this is a sure sign that the child will be naughty and disobedient.

856 A child is thought to become either "naughty" or "good"
577 at about the age of five or six; but its character is not finally
865 formed until about fifteen, or, in the case of a girl, not until
157 she gives birth to her first child. A "naughty" child is one who is unfriendly, who hits people, quarrels with its friends and throws stones at them; but the worst characteristic of "bad" children is that they will not co-operate with others. The domineering and strong-willed child with a mind of its own, which is looked upon with favour in our culture, would be quite out of place in Lepcha society, and would be definitely branded as "naughty." This is an excellent